AI in the headlines: the portrayal of the ethical issues of artificial intelligence in the media

Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) technologies become increasingly prominent in our daily lives, media coverage of the ethical considerations of these technologies has followed suit. Since previous research has shown that media coverage can drive public discourse about novel technologies, studying how the ethical issues of AI are portrayed in the media may lead to greater insight into the potential ramifications of this public discourse, particularly with regard to development and regulation of AI. This paper expands upon previous research by systematically analyzing and categorizing the media portrayal of the ethical issues of AI to better understand how media coverage of these issues may shape public debate about AI. Our results suggest that the media has a fairly realistic and practical focus in its coverage of the ethics of AI, but that the coverage is still shallow. A multifaceted approach to handling the social, ethical and policy issues of AI technology is needed, including increasing the accessibility of correct information to the public in the form of fact sheets and ethical value statements on trusted webpages (e.g., government agencies), collaboration and inclusion of ethics and AI experts in both research and public debate, and consistent government policies or regulatory frameworks for AI technology.